

2026.01.20

4.12 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the structural deficit in his department (OQ.4/2026):

Will the Minister advise whether, in his assessment, it is feasible to address the structural deficit in his department without additional growth bids and, if so, detail how efficiencies are being identified and implemented?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet of St. Saviour (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I think I should start by thanking the Deputy for referring to our situation as a structural deficit, rather than an overspend.

[11:15]

In answer to the question, I am very hopeful that we can come in at health within budget, as near as we can to within budget. I am very grateful, I have to say, to the Assembly for voting through the extra money, both for the base budget and for the additional work that we are doing on preventative measures and digital. But to that notwithstanding we still had to defer £1.2 million worth of spending and cast that into this year's budget, which starts us off a little bit on the back foot. But, as I say, I think morale is very much raised in the health service across the piece and everybody appreciates the need to do everything they can to come in within budget for 2026.

4.12.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

What is the Minister doing to ensure efficiencies are going to be secured for 2026? Can the Minister explain how many efficiencies will be made during this year?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I certainly could not put a number on the amount of efficiencies because this is ongoing work. The work for 2026 has been underway for some time. I think the Deputy is probably aware that we are required within the budget framework to come in with £9 million worth of efficiencies in accordance with the Financial Recovery Plan. The Senior Leadership Team have been working with the care groups since the autumn on this year's budget, they are looking at better procurement, clinical productivity and every way that they can find of saving money on the one hand and generating money on the other. I think in addition to that I have made it clear, and it is a shame that we are running out of time in this parliamentary session, but we are going to have a very close look at health funding going forward. I think at some point we are going to have to continually increase the money. We have got an ageing population, I think an 8 per cent cumulative increase in people over 65 coming into the care system. I have been talking to a couple of retired clinicians who are going to help form part of a working group to undertake some of that work with our officers. I am hopeful that throughout the course of the year we can establish that before this Parliament comes to an end and, hopefully, they can work throughout the course of the year to come up with some suggestions that we will then go and talk to the public about.

4.12.2 Deputy J. Renouf:

I have slightly changed my question because of the comments that the Minister just made at the end there. If there is a working party being set up, will the Minister confirm who is on it, what the terms of reference will be and when it will be reporting, please?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Certainly happy to do that; when it is being done, it is in its early stages. Work has been going on with the officers already but I just think it is helpful to bring in people with experience of working in the system to help with that. The truth is that the 2 individuals concerned have already contacted me to say that they have been doing some work and it struck me, as it was useful to combine the work that they are doing with the work that we had been doing, so that we could have a more collaborative approach

to coming up with the proposal. The terms of reference and the people involved, I do not think it is appropriate for me to mention their names in the Assembly, but certainly happy to make that public as and when we have got the situation completed.

4.12.3 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I wonder if the Minister would clarify how their work might interact with ongoing work, which the Minister might perhaps be able to update the Assembly on relating to an overall health strategy.

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I only met with one of the 2 gentlemen at the end of last week. As I say, these are very much early days. I am very happy to report on it as things progress.

The Bailiff:

Final supplementary, Deputy Andrews. That brings that period of questions to an end.